Chapter 5
Office Administration

Staffing and Establishment

5.1 The community's growing awareness of citizen's rights to public and social services has resulted in a steady rise in complaints to this Office over the years. In 2006/07, the number topped 5,606 complaints.

5.2 To cope with the increased workload, we employed more temporary investigators than ever before to supplement our regular investigative workforce, both for complaint handling and for conducting direct investigations. The number of temporary investigators employed in 2007/08 equalled 1,171 man-days or 4.4 full time investigators.

5.3 As a long-term solution for easing the pressure on staff from casework, expanding our capacity for direct investigations and training staff for career development, we have reviewed our establishment. As a result, from 1 November 2007, we have revised the number of investigation teams from four to five and reinstated the DI team put to rest in 2002/03 due to funding constraint in the public sector. In this context, we recruited five full-time investigators as well as adjusted our manpower development. Our organisation since November is shown in **Fig 5.1**.

5.4 For succession planning, it has been my practice to recruit staff at the more junior ranks where appropriate, to groom the young and meritorious members for career advancement. This aims to strengthen their sense of commitment to service on the one hand and build up a team of competent and promising investigators for the long-term operation of the Office on the other.

5.5 On 31 March 2008, we had a total of 98 regular staff, eight more than last year.

Fig. 5.1 Organisational Structure

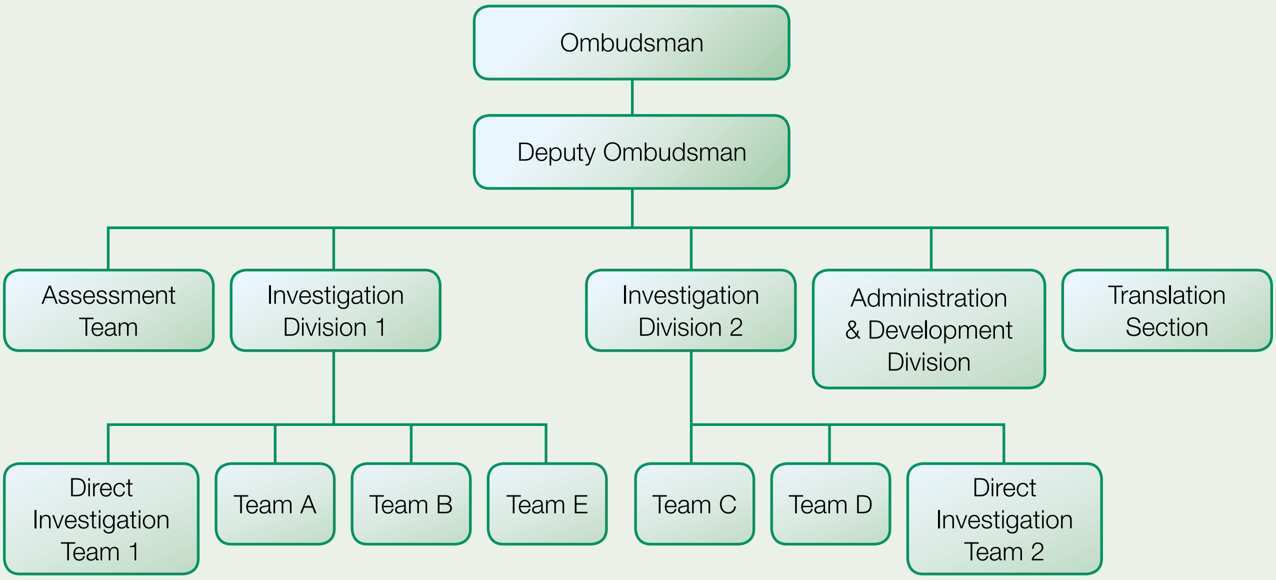

Fig. 5.2

Staffing Complement

Breakdown of Staff	As at 31.3.2006	As at 31.3.2007	As at 31.3.2008
Directorate	4	4	4
Investigation	43	45	50
Administrative & Support	38	41	44
Total No. of Regular Staff	**85**	**90**	**98**
Temporary staff: equivalence to full-time posts (total man-days)	1.2 (353)	2.4 (698)	4.4 (1,171)
Grand Total	**86.2**	**92.4**	**102.4**

Salary Review

5.6 When we determined our salary structure upon delinking from Government systems and practices in 2001, we had lowered the entry salaries of most ranks by two to six points against those for comparable civil service ranks. The object was to keep salaries in line with prevailing market conditions at the time and to ensure long-term financial viability of the Office under the “one-line vote” subvention.

5.7 With the improved economic and employment situation, we need to enhance our competitiveness in recruitment and retention of quality staff. In this connection, we reviewed our salary level in mid-2007/08 in line with adjustments in the civil service and other public organisations. Apart from following the 2007/08 civil service pay revision, we also examined the entry salaries of non-directorate ranks and revised upwards by one to two points with effect from October 2007. This has narrowed the difference in salaries between our Office and the civil service.

5.8 Despite the revision, the remuneration for individual grades remains no better than those of comparable ranks in the civil service, in line with the practice for subvented organisations.

Staff Training

5.9 We continue to attach great importance to developing professionalism among our investigative staff in complaint management through training and experience sharing.

5.10 Apart from sponsoring them on courses of the Civil Service Training and Development Institute and arranging for in-house Putonghua training to better equip our staff for their work, we also commissioned an English training course for my investigators to sharpen their English writing skills. The result has been encouraging. In June 2007, we also invited the School of Continuing and Professional Studies of The Chinese University of Hong Kong to conduct a two-day course for my investigators for improvement of their presentation skills.

5.11 As before, we organised internal open forums during the year. These covered the following topics:

- Handling of complaints relating to the Code on Access to Information
- Work of the Audit Commission

5.12 For the second session, we are grateful to the Director of Audit for sending two of his senior staff to brief us on the role and operation of his Commission. This forum has helped to widen the outlook of my investigators by reference to another facet of investigation work focusing on management of resources and cost-effectiveness in operation.

Fig. 5.3 Open Forum

5.13 In addition to internal forums, we also organised a joint forum with the Equal Opportunities Commission ("EOC") and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data ("PCPD") on 17 March 2008, to share experience in complaint management and investigation. In the opening session, the heads of the organisations enlightened participants on the role of their organisations in providing redress to individuals with grievances.

5.14 The forum consisted of two parts. In the first part, we had fruitful exchanges on the mode of operation, delivery of service and techniques in customer service. In the second part, we had free and fresh discussions on operational issues of common concern and practices for mutual benefit. The topics included meeting complainants' expectations, management of personal information and resolution of possible conflict among the three organisations due to the statutory requirements for maintaining secrecy in and the collection or provision of information for investigation.

5.15 The consensus was that the forum had achieved the intended purpose and should continue to be run on a yearly basis. It has opened our minds to fresh aspects for cooperation and mutual understanding.

Fig. 5.4 Joint Forum with EOC and PCPD

5.16 Apart from these forums, we also hold experience sharing sessions as and when necessary to broaden the outlook of my investigators. An example was the session on the Office's official visit to Beijing, Dalian and Inner Mongolia in August 2007,

which was part of our annual Exchange Programme with the China Supervision Institute.

Complaints against the Office

5.17 This year, we processed a total of nine complaints against our Office.

5.18 Two of the complaints against our staff manners were partially substantiated. This underlines the needs for us to improve our approach to serving the public.

5.19 However, I have to emphasise that these complaints do not necessarily reflect on the performance of my staff or the quality of our inquiries. Often, they arise from dissatisfaction with my conclusions and decisions to their satisfaction in brief, I did not conclude their cases in their favour.

5.20 Nevertheless, we take every critical comment as an opportunity to review our practices afresh. We treasure the lessons learned and revise our systems and procedures to meet the rising public aspirations and growing demand for more efficient and effective services.

Fig. 5.5

Complaints against the Office concluded in 2007/08

Nature	Substantiated	Partially Substantiated	Unsubstantiated	Incapable of Determination
Staff manner (including delay and negligence)	-	2	3	2
Work systems and procedures	-	-	1	-
Both staff manner and work systems and procedures	-	-	1	-
Total	**9**			